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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the organizational planning process and its potential contribution as a method of facilitating a school system's ability to adapt to its changing environment. After reviewing the literature on educational planning and discussing several different planning models, the author concludes that the educational planning process could be a useful complement to the existing decision-making style of the North York (Ontario) Board of Education. (Author/JG)

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NORTH YORK BOARD OF EDUCATION

RESEARCH REPORT

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EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

INTRODUCTION

DEFINITIONS AND MODELS

BENEFITS

CONCLUSIONS

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for
Task Force on Educational Planning

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Introduction

In reading the literature related to educational planning, one can consistently find the following points:

Planning is a tool and a guide to practice and not simply an objective. It is a service which facilitates the accomplishment of organizational goals.

Planning is but one aspect of the total decision process in a system; in order to be effective it must be linked to the other phases of the process.

Planning should be a continuous process.

Planning processes must be viewed as being complex and multi-dimensional.

Planning should be comprehensive and broad in scope.

Planning should be directed toward increasing, rather than decreasing, the range of possible future options.

Planning should be change-oriented as well as future-oriented.

Planning approaches and techniques must be appropriate to policies, goals and programs.

Planning must still be regarded as more art than science.

Planning should take place at all organizational levels.

Planning must be closely tied to overall management.

At the macro-level, educational planning should be coordinated with general social and economic planning.

The institutionalization of planning within a system will require adjustments in existing structures and processes.

This paper examines the organizational planning process and its potential contribution as a method of facilitating a school system's ability to adapt to its changing environment. If administrators pose planning-type questions, can they make better decisions? e.g.

1. Will the planning activities help clarify and justify what should be introduced, expanded, maintained, reduced or eliminated?

2. What will we be doing differently a year from now?

3. How should we analyze the present situation to predict, explain, and prepare for the future?

4. What decisions in the future are we already aware of that we can begin now to prepare for?

5. What are these preparation activities?

6. In analyzing the present situation, what factual information do we have, what can we acquire and what do we need?

7. What subjective opinions would be valuable?

8. If innovations are to be introduced to bring about change, how do we know they will ultimately improve what will happen to children?

9. Who will oppose these innovations and why? How can their resistance be reduced?

10. What are our major problems, can we state them in precise terms so that we have a frame of reference to establish the evaluation criteria for proposed solutions?

Definitions and Models

According to Coladrci and Getzels (1), administrators must cast their eye to the everyday functioning of the educational organization in order to construct a realistic planning model. It is important, they maintain, to make explicit the problems that give rise to the planning and decision-making process so that a planning model is chosen that is appropriate to the particular problems of a given area, board or department. A clear, well thought-out planning theory provides organizations not only with effective practices, but also with a frame of reference that establishes the criteria by which such practices can eventually be evaluated.

Let us begin by outlining the assumptions and biases associated with the selection of various types of planning models. Miklos (8) draws a clear distinction between 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' approaches to educational planning. The emphasis in quantitative planning models is on the context of planning. In other words, such theories see planning activities generally as shaped by current educational policy which, in turn, is a reflection of the political, social and economic climate in which it operates. This points out that planning models are meaningful only if the context from which they arose is understood. The chart on the following page includes some of the possible forms that quantitative approaches to planning can take.

PLANNING CHART

Educational Policy	Environmental Climate	Focus of Planning Activities	Shortcoming
QUANTITATIVE			
Expansion & Extension of Formal Schooling	- Increased demand for education - Pressure for extension of schooling - Increased need for financial and human material resources	- Demographic forecasts - I.D. of feasibility targets - Monitor system with mapping and accounts - I.D. factors which influence demand	- technical problem of predicting demand - isolation of educational planning from other planning - ignores problems of content & efficiency
Education as an Instrument of Economic Policy	- Education considered important in stimulating economic growth - Periods of industralization & occupational shift - Education is considered investment in human resources	- Project manpower requirements from growth target - develop supply-demand models - cost/benefit analysis - rate of returns studies	- difficult to estimate future needs and occupational structure - gap between planning-policy decisions - estimating benefits of education - ignores quality of education
Education as an Instrument of Social Policy	- Continued disparities in spite of expansion - Differential participation and success rates - 'equality' -norm applied to ed. - active social policy	- collect data on participation rates and other conditions - develop indexes of the extent to which goals are achieved - set targets and devise policy implementation	- no precise definition of social objectives - developing effective policy instruments - motivating individuals to take advantage of opportunities
Increased Efficiency at all Levels	- rising cost of education and increased competition from other social services - pressure to demonstrate goal attainment - perceived lack of efficiency	- goal setting processes - indicators of performance - simulation - systems analysis - cost effectiveness studies - budgeting systems	- difficulty defining objectives & developing procedures for setting priorities
QUALITATIVE			
Qualitative Improvements in Education	- Pressure to reshape entire system - Emphasis on adaptation and change - Desire to make system more effective in terms of a broad range of goals	- quantitative & qualitative forecasts - monitor present policies & practices - research & development - develop policy planning links and information systems	- reconciling highly participative decision making and efficiency - obtaining involvement - combining coordination with flexibility

The qualitative approach to educational planning, on the other hand, is not as concerned with external and contextual influences as with the quality of educational life itself. The assumption underlying this type of model is that the solution to any educational problem is planned change. The various methods by which change can be implemented are through (1) innovation (2) forecasting the future beyond quantitative considerations (3) alternative futures, the purpose of which is to identify the future of present planning and to go beyond traditional extrapolations to predict possible changes in social and political values.

It follows, then, that people working in the field can both identify and define problems with more clarity than those outside the field's operations. For this reason, Daniel Griffiths (6) maintains that planning and decision-making is "an organizational matter" and not an activity confined solely to a central planning and development unit which is removed from the field and therefore least conversant with its specific problems.

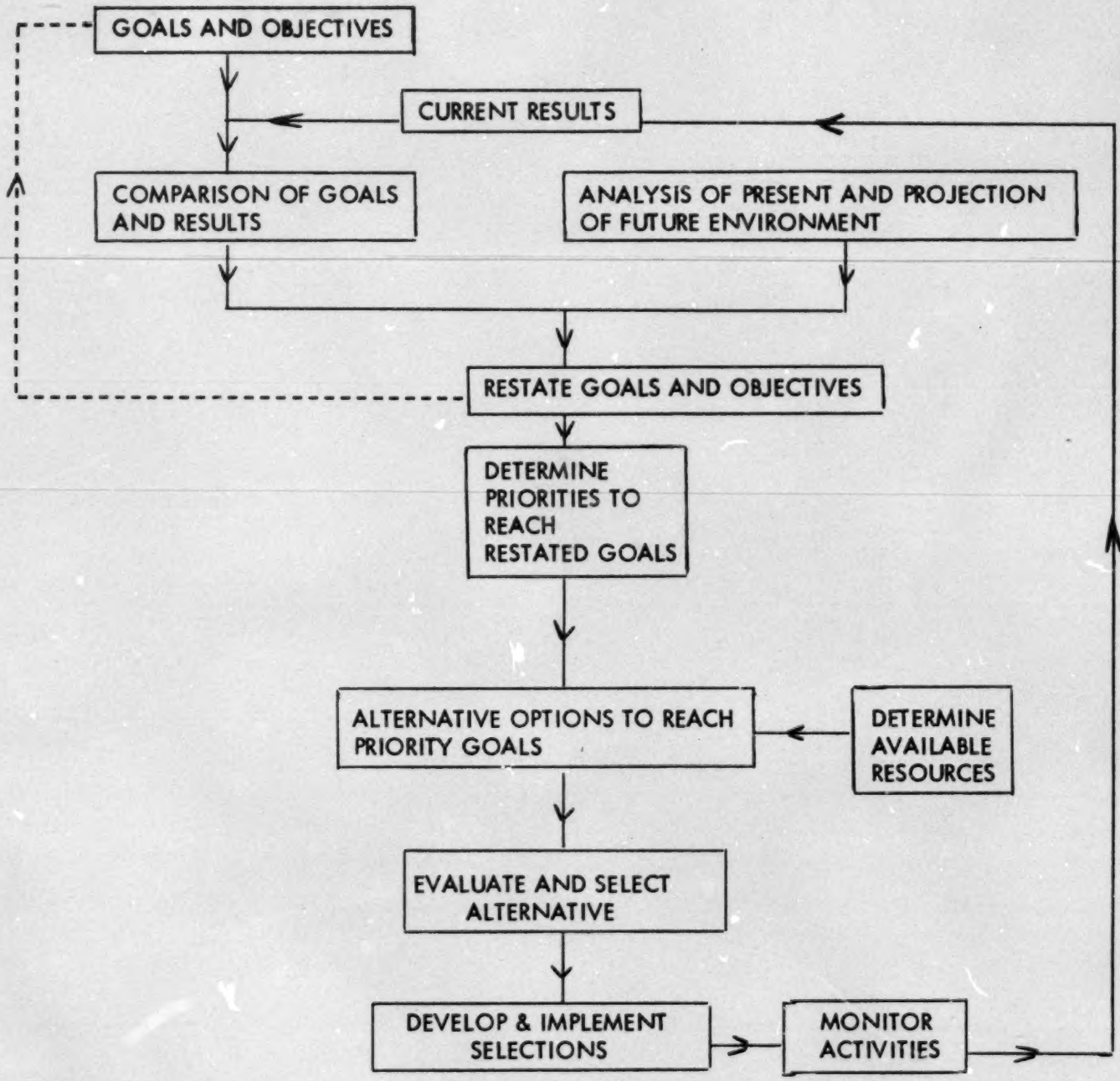
The role of the planning department, according to Griffiths(6), is to complement field personnel by providing them with the technical skills with which to plan and make decisions. Professional planners must act as a resource to assist people in the field and to help them articulate the problems in terms which will enable effective planning (and action) to follow.

The central administrator in the organizational setting functions as a policy-maker who plans activities related to policy objectives. The field administrator, on the other hand, is the one who implements practices to achieve the goals outlined in the policies set by the central administrator. Such field personnel are accountable to the central administrators as to (1) which programs should be maintained because they are consistent with policy and (2) which programs must be changed since they are not accomplishing intended aims.

Greenfield (5) also understands planning as an administrative function of control. In education, the school board and central administrators do not possess complete authority for the making of all decisions. Instead, the administrator controls the outcome of organizational activity by setting policy and by encouraging the various relevant departments in the organization (in this case, including schools) to exercise creativity and initiative in an effort to achieve objectives and to solve attendant difficulties.

The ideas in the previous two paragraphs are summarized in the following planning model.

PLANNING PROCESS MODEL


GOALS AND OBJECTIVES
CURRENT RESULTS
COMPARISON OF GOALS AND RESULTS
ANALYSIS OF PRESENT AND PROJECTION OF FUTURE ENVIRONMENT
RESTATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES
DETERMINE PRIORITIES TO REACH RESTATED GOALS
ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS TO REACH PRIORITY GOALS
DETERMINE AVAILABLE RESOURCES
EVALUATE AND SELECT ALTERNATIVE
DEVELOP & IMPLEMENT SELECTIONS
MONITOR ACTIVITIES

As can be seen from the model, planning is a process which involves stating the goals of the system, determining the degree to which these goals are being met and using these comparisons as a basis for establishing priorities. Planning includes assessing the resources needed and available to attain the goals.

One way of conceptualizing the planning process is a series of meetings between executives who are trying to arrive at a mutually agreed set of decisions about actions to be taken in the future. In all of these meetings the basic question being addressed is the same, What should we do? In order to develop a detailed answer to this question, it is advisable to break it into a series of more specific questions, such as those mentioned in the introduction.

According to Miklos et al (8) this type of planning involves:

1. the identification and refinement of alternative aims
2. development of alternative means of achieving them
3. identification of the most promising means
4. monitoring the extent to which aims have been achieved
5. on the basis of the information gained, the means are revised and aims are altered.

This model implies that there is regular evaluation and alteration not only of the manner in which policy is operationalized, but also of aspects of the policy which prove unrealisable.

The planning model which Greenfield (5) developed consists, in rarefield form, of three basic aspects: (1) the control function which makes the decision to act (2) the effector which carries out the decision and (3) the sensing mechanism which measures the discrepancy between actual and intended actions. This concept is not only circular and repetitive, but also highly dependent upon effective communication between the different parts of the organization. Insofar as the system is continually evaluating aspirations in terms of the benefits of past performance and adjusting the necessary part of the process (control effector mechanism), planning is a never-ending organizational activity.

Benefits of Planning

1. One outcome of planning is a clear statement of goals and specific objectives. This provides clarification of fundamental issues and gives coherence and direction to managerial decisions.

2. Planning requires that persons involved in this process make explicit the means by which they plan to reach objectives. In other words, it outlines a critical path by continually asking what tasks must be done, what inputs are necessary to do the tasks, what outputs are to be produced, and when and what inter-dependencies exist between these tasks.

3. Planning also ensures the early identification of potential problem areas. It allows for alterations in the allocation of time and money in order to make deadlines and meet objectives. This would reduce the number of crisis problems.

4. Planning facilitates the development of a team approach to management and improves communication as to what we intend to do.

5. Planning is a self-regulating process since it critically evaluates its procedures and policies continually in an effort to improve the educational services it provides. According to Mathew Miles (10) the degree of health of an organization can be measured by its tendency to engage in constant self-study. Using this measure, planning is a contribution to the effective operation of the educational organization.

6. The freeing of more time for senior staff for engaging in creative leadership activities rather than continually reacting to immediate "Crises".

Conclusion

An examination of the literature of educational planning suggests that the process could provide a useful complement to our present administrative decision-making style. Since this is a relatively recent innovation, it is recommended that school systems which have on-going educational planning units be visited to discuss the implementation of the process.

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